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LYMAN BEECHER

EDWARD F. HAYWARD



(Beecher)
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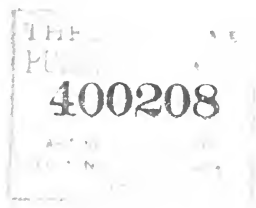
LYMAN BEECHER

BY

EDWARD F. HAYWARD

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LYMAN BEECHER

CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE AND MINISTRY AT EAST HAMPTON

Perhaps no one during the first half of the nineteenth century was more closely connected with the better life of America, both in its religious and in its reformatory aspects, than Lyman Beecher. Not only were his own activities wide-spread and effective, but he seemed like a broad and fertile tree, which had sent out many shoots to extend and continue his influence. In this respect a suggestive parallel might be drawn between the Beecher family in this country, and that of the Wesleys in England. The latter stood at the turning-point in the eighteenth century when a moral awakening was demanded, and inaugurated a movement which was to antagonize with the forces of freedom the more formal tendencies in religion. The former came upon the stage in America at a time when the Puritan theology was beginning

to feel the disintegrating touch of the modern spirit, and when the Puritan conscience was beginning to reach out from religious discussion to practical reform. Both embodied much of the best inspiration of their time, and both faced with a sort of prophetic faith and courage the new day which was coming.

There was only one "mother of the Wesleys"—and there were nineteen of them—while it took two mothers, both rare and consecrated women, to rear the Beecher family of thirteen. But in either case there was a strong individual to father them. Samuel Wesley was overshadowed by his two more famous sons, but Lyman Beecher, besides achieving a fame of his own, stamped all his children, both sons and daughters, with something of his own originality, fervor and strength. Born in New Haven, Connecticut, October 12, 1775, he was able to trace his family line back through four generations to the John Beecher who came over with his widowed mother in the company under Davenport in 1638. The father of this John having died just before the sailing, the mother, on account of her being a midwife, was induced not to withdraw from the expedition by the promise of her late husband's share in the town plot. On the maternal side, Lyman Beecher came

from a Guilford family, his mother, Esther Lyman, having been the third and favorite of the five wives of his father, David Beecher.

The Beechers were a sturdy race of blacksmiths and farmers, with more than ordinary spirit and intelligence; but the death of his mother at an early age threw Lyman on the care of a maternal aunt, and transferred the scene of his childhood to the Uncle Lot Benton house at North Guilford. The autobiography contains an interesting account of his boyhood spent in this locality, from which he returned to New Haven to begin his preparation for college at the age of sixteen. Lyman Beecher used to say that he should have been a farmer if his Uncle Benton had not cleared up a fifteen acre lot and compelled him to drive a plow over the whole three times.

"Now I am naturally quick," he says in the autobiography, "and that old plow was so slow—one furrow a little way, and then another—and the whole fifteen acres three times over, some of it steep as the roof of a house, I became inexpressibly sick of it. What should I do, then, but build castles in the air? First I knew I would be a rod ahead, and the plow out, and Uncle Lot would say 'Whoa,' and come and give me a shake. Not long after

the job was finished Uncle Benton and I were walking together over to Toket Hill, and I had got so used to driving that I fell into a brown study, and kept saying 'Whoa!' 'Gee!' as if the oxen were along. 'Why, Lyman,' said Uncle Lot, 'did you think you were driving the oxen?' It was then, I believe, he gave up. Next day we were out behind the barn picking up apples. 'Lyman,' said he, 'should you like to go to college?' 'I don't know, sir,' said I. But the next day we were out picking apples again, and, without his saying a word, I said, 'Yes, sir, I should.' So he drove over to New Haven, and talked with father, and they settled it between them. Uncle Lot was to clothe me—Aunt Benton could make nearly everything—and father was to do the rest."

At New Haven young Beecher studied in a school taught by Colonel Mansfield, and afterwards with his Uncle Williston who, for a clergyman, was certainly very much given to smoking; for his pupil tells us that in his lifetime he consumed more than a ton of tobacco, and that he never remembered to have seen him without a pipe in his mouth. The preparation was finally undertaken by Parson Bray of North Guilford, a preacher of the old school, no sermon of whom he declared had

he ever understood, and then in 1793 the freshman class in Yale College was entered.

Yale College at this time had three buildings only, defaced and dirty, with meager library, and no apparatus worth mentioning. Neither did the teaching force exert any marked influence upon the student mind until the advent of Dr. Dwight at the beginning of Lyman Beecher's junior year. The presidency had become vacant the May previous, and when Dr. Dwight assumed the chair he found the college in a moral and spiritual condition which was deplorable in the extreme. Intemperance, gambling, licentiousness, profanity and rowdiness were common. Skepticism was so general that the college church was almost deserted. Tom Paine, Beecher tells us, was the hero of the hour, while the students assumed the names of well known infidels, one passing as Voltaire, another as Rousseau, and a third as D'Alembert.

Dr. Dwight at once addressed himself to this state of affairs, with the result that unbelief soon became unpopular in the college. In discussions with the students, he heard what they had to say and answered them, carrying his thought out more fully in his preaching which, according to one listener, at least, had "a pith

and power of doctrine that has not been since surpassed, if equalled." Lyman Beecher took notes of all these discourses and thoroughly worked them into all the processes of his thinking. He was also deeply affected by the personality of the man. This effect was general on the student body, which, almost without exception, gave Dr. Dwight its love and reverence. Of noble presence and winning smile, he was able to enforce his thought with more than the power of his disciplined logic and his convincing style.

"Oh, how I loved him," said Lyman Beecher, looking back over his life. "I loved him as my own soul, and he loved me as a son." Once afterward, at Litchfield, he had the satisfaction of telling his beloved teacher all that he owed to him; and when, soon after this, the news of his death came to him, the effect was magical. It was in church as the Sunday service was drawing to a close. A man, entering suddenly, walked up into the pulpit and whispered something in the preacher's ear. Turning to the congregation Mr. Beecher said, "Dr. Dwight is gone!" Then, raising his hands, he said with a burst of tears, as if he beheld the translation, "My father! my father! the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" The congregation,

we are told, with an electric impulse, rose to their feet, and many eyes were bathed in tears; while his daughter Catherine describes it as one of the most impressive scenes which she ever witnessed.

In the Yale class of 1797 there were thirty-one graduates, sixteen of whom became lawyers, and fifteen who entered the ministry. Lyman Beecher tells us that from the beginning he had had a feeling that he should preach; but it is evident that there were in his nature several different men besides the one which moved others so powerfully in the pulpit and came triumphantly out of so many discussions touching religion and reform. Although he rightly claimed for himself a fitness for the legal profession, the quibbling of the law disgusted him. It is easy to see from the autobiography, however, with what thorough enjoyment he entered into his various trials for heresy, and the acuteness and comprehensiveness of his method of conducting them. While settled in Litchfield, he tells us that he managed some dozen or fifteen councils, and that he never succeeded better than in the ecclesiastical courts. "If I had stayed in Connecticut," he adds, "I should have been occupied in such business half my time." A member of the legal

profession would find keen pleasure in the account of the trial in which he successfully defended a young minister against a jealous wife, and completely routed Edwards of Hartford, one of the sharpest practitioners of that day.

Evidently there was a business man, also, spoiled in the making of a minister, and not at all the sort which would, in the prophetic language of his father, "have needed to scratch a poor man's head all his lifetime." The college butler leaving six months before the end of the senior year, young Beecher borrowed three hundred dollars with which to buy out his stock. His management of the college buttery was such a success that the already embarrassed senior was able to replace the borrowed capital, clear up a hundred dollars of indebtedness, buy himself a suit of clothes and provide for his Commencement expenses, with another hundred dollars left over in cash. Having bought a load of watermelons and cantelopes, he did not hesitate to trundle them across the green in a wheelbarrow in the face of the whole college. Sending to New York by an English parson who was a good judge of the article, he bought a hogshead of porter; and so it came about that the pioneer temperance reformer in America,

if not in the world, was able to look back to an actual experience as a retailer of ardent spirits. His own conclusion seems to have been warranted that if he had gone into business he would have made money.

Although at this time unconverted, he kept saying to himself, "I'll preach." Religious questions troubled him, however, and he found no one to guide him, until his mental perturbations finally affected his health. Walking home from the searching sermons of Dr. Dwight, it was as if "a whole avalanche" had rolled down on his mind, and he wept at every step. Living "under the law," and having no real, vital relations to Christ, he tells us that he plunged about in the "sloughs of high Calvinism." They gave him books to read which only took him away from the Bible, which he afterward came to see was what he most needed. His later conclusion was that Brainerd's Life, and Edwards on the Affections, and the rest, were "a bad generation of books, calculated rather to produce hypochondria than to bring spiritual power and peace."

In spite of such reading, however, he was at last conscious of reaching stable ground, and by means of this bitter experience was enabled to evolve the wiser methods of what he called

his "clinical theology." By degrees the light came; and although there were still momentary difficulties with doctrine clear on into the divinity course, he was henceforth fixed in what was to be his life work. For nine months after graduation, he remained under the continued instruction of Dr. Dwight. There was no Hebrew, then, he tells us, and only a course of reading marked out for the student, with subjects to write upon, and a conference for discussion once a week. What he received here was mostly the deepened impress upon his mind and character which had begun in the advent of Dr. Dwight. The latter was a controversialist of the better type, thoroughly alive to the tendencies of the times, and ever alert to combat what he considered to be theological error. He was, moreover, a believer in more stirring methods of preaching than those generally in vogue at this time.

In the ferment of the Revolution, the earlier ferment of the "Great Awakening" under Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards had been forgotten. The fires, however, were only covered, to burst out again into flame as a new century was beginning. Dwight's was the kindling touch, and he communicated the sacred fire to his almost worshipful pupil. "A new day was

dawning as I came on the stage," says the latter, "and I was baptized into the revival spirit." Indeed, he finds even thus early that he was not fitted for the quiet, studious life which attracted some of his companions. Made for action, he felt that the Lord "drove" him, and that he was ready; and so he entered upon the course which was ever afterward to be "at full speed."

"I could not stop," he says. "As demands were made by events, I met them to the best of my ability. My ideas were all my own. I never despised creeds. I did not neglect the writings of great and good men. But I always commenced my investigations of Christian doctrines, duty, and experience with the teachings of the Bible, considered as a system of moral government, legal and evangelical, in the hand of a Mediator, administered by his word and Spirit, over a world of rebel, free, and accountable subjects."

Before being licensed to preach, Beecher was troubled with fears lest he might not find a settlement. With four candidates being examined together, it seemed to him doubtful if there would be places enough to go round. East Hampton on Long Island had become pastorless through the death of Dr. Buell, and thither his steps were soon directed, with the

result that after some delay he was finally called to fill the vacant pulpit. The church here had been for some time in the throes of revival excitement alternating with revival reactions. Dr. Buell had tried to stem the tide of unbelief, but the skepticism of the age had crept in and been greatly augmented by the teachers of the local academy and by a club of the more radical spirits about the town. Although Dr. Buell possessed great powers of appeal, and was said sometimes to have left the pulpit and pursued his quest of sinners even into the galleries, he died in doubt if an evangelical successor could be settled in his place.

It was reported to Beecher that what was wanted was "a man who could stand his ground in argument and break the heads of these infidels;" and so, with mingled humility and eagerness for the fray, he set sail from New London on Thanksgiving morning. A horse, with a little white hair trunk containing his personal effects carried on the pommel of the saddle,—all that he had in the world—went with him "over this Jordan" of Long Island Sound, and so the promised land to which he had looked forward was reached. The ordination took place at Middletown, Sept. 5, 1799, and then the newly settled pastor went home to

Guilford and was married to Roxana Foote, to whom he had been engaged for two years. During this period of waiting, the young lady's attractiveness of mind and person seems to have caused her lover occasional uneasiness, for he wrote her long theological love letters after the stilted manner of the times, in which more attention is paid to the state of her soul than to the claims of sentiment. He fears that her piety is merely head-work and amiability a natural affair, and not a more or less miraculous change of heart.

The young lady appears to have read the suggestions attentively, but not to have shared in the somewhat intricate, not to say tortuous involutions of his spiritual philosophy. Her conversion had seemed to her a simple matter, which took place at the age of five or six years, if indeed it had ever been anything but a constitutional habit of mind: Lyman Beecher never had any doubts after marriage of the saintly character of this first and dearest of his wives, the mother of eight of his children, and the helpmate who freely sacrificed for him both her means and her health.

Together they set up housekeeping in a house of their own, and the long struggle of his life began, a struggle full of joy and con-

quest, but full also of trial and suffering. But there never was any bitterness in it, either in the passing or in the retrospect. Looking back over it in old age, the veteran warrior for God and humanity would have gladly fought it through again. But then two of his wives, the mothers of his children, had long since laid down the conflict, worn out with the anxiety and strain of his exacting life.

The prosperity of the new pastorate, however, was soon to be interrupted by a year of ill health, and by numberless difficulties incident to a meager salary, a growing family, and a sanguine, free-handed temperament such as belonged to Lyman Beecher. The old house which he had taken had to be remodeled, and even then it was almost as bare inside as it was outside. Although in all the town there were only sanded floors, the Beechers ventured on the innovation of a carpet for their best room. "Itching" as he himself said, to spend a sum of money given him by his uncle, the young husband bought a bale of cotton at an auction; the wife then spun it and had it woven. Sending to New York for colors, she ground and mixed them herself; she next nailed the carpet to the garret floor, sized it, and painted it in oils, with a border and a center of roses

and other flowers. When one of the deacons came in to see the newfangled furnishing, he was quite overwhelmed with the magnificence and halted doubtfully on the threshold. Being urged to walk in, he replied: "Why, I can't 'thout steppin' on't." After further awestruck inspection, he added, "Do ye think ye can have all that, *and heaven, too?*"

The ill health referred to was a natural result of a make-up such as Lyman Beecher's when confronted with a field of labor offering innumerable invitations to work and a people unsparing in their demands. He had inherited an instability of the nervous system against which he had always to contend. Years of experience in avoiding or modifying the effects of excitement and overwork afterwards brought him a certain independence of this condition, but the first battle with it at the beginning of his ministry was long and bitter. Preaching finally had to be given up, and even travel brought little relief. Gradually, however, he began his sermons again, the deacons taking the other parts of the service; but it was only after a year of tedious uncertainty of health, amidst the not always well concealed incredulity and impatience of his people, that he finally recovered his full working power,

Amid many evidences of success, there was a growing dissatisfaction with the situation, however, which led the pastor to seek a change in 1810. The East Hampton parish was full of captious elements, and the salary had never been sufficient. The young wife, though burdened with a rapidly increasing family, had added to the income by taking boarders and keeping a private school, in which she herself taught the English branches, French, drawing, painting and embroidery, but still ends could not be made to meet. The new field at Litchfield seemed to offer a more adequate response to his labors, and so amid many mutual expressions of regret the relation of pastor and people was severed.

CHAPTER II

LITCHFIELD

The town of Litchfield represented the best and most characteristic life of New England in the early part of the nineteenth century. The people were sturdy and independent to the verge of eccentricity, "as distinctively marked," to quote an authority of that time, "as when they first came from the mint of Nature." Village "characters" abounded, and all curiosities of mind and manner were tolerated. As every one went to meeting, the meeting-house was likened to a sort of museum of antiquities where the past and present mingled in a sort of grotesque contrariety.

The village itself was beautiful, finely situated on high ground, and surrounded by a most interesting and attractive country. The Beecher children were fond of writing about it in after years and of dilating upon its charms. It was indeed an ideal place in which to bring up a family of bright girls and boys, and they never

ceased to congratulate themselves that their steps had been directed thither in youth. Its schools were famous in that day, flourishing and well endowed, and they attracted to the town many people of scientific and professional note. With an unusual average of intelligence, Litchfield also boasted citizens of national influence and renown. Walking its shaded streets, one would meet senators, representatives, governors, judges. Young men flocked to its law school from all parts of the land, and some came even from Europe, to avail themselves of the instruction of Mr. Beecher's two parishioners, Judge Reeve and Judge Gould. The former was a stately man, of great beauty of person and gentleness of manner, who, having lost his natural voice, delivered his lectures in a whisper which could be heard by a hundred law students at once. With him Lyman Beecher formed a close friendship, while in Judge Gould he found a challenge of a peculiarly aggressive and stimulating quality. "Tell Mr. Beecher," was the message which he afterwards sent his old pastor and antagonist at the time when the question of French influence was in debate, "that I am improving in orthodoxy. I have got so far as this that I believe in the total depravity of the whole French nation."

Such, indeed, were the varied attractions of the place that they were never forgotten by those who had enjoyed a residence there. Many years later Mrs. Stowe was in the habit of meeting in Paris an aged French count who in his youth had been connected with the law school at Litchfield. His family had been exiled in the first Revolution, which led to his being sent to America. Looking back after his restoration to country and social privilege, he felt only the liveliest appreciation of his experience in the bright New England village, and often declared to Mrs. Stowe that the society of Litchfield was the most charming in the world.

Into this community life, with its fine natural setting among the hills, Lyman Beecher threw himself with all his ardor of temperament and with the full force of his ripened powers. As at East Hampton, a challenge awaited him in the religious conditions of the town and church. The latter filled up at his coming, but there existed in the parish a strong undercurrent of disapproval of those revival methods to which the new pastor was thoroughly committed. Even at the time of the Great Awakening under Edwards and Whitefield there had been decided opposition expressed, while under one of Beecher's predecessors, a unanimous decision

not to listen to the revivalists led to the report that the people of Litchfield had "voted Christ out of their borders."

But Lyman Beecher was nothing if not a revivalist, and during his sixteen years' pastorate the fires never smouldered for long at a time. Fortunately he was always more than a revivalist, and fully matched his zeal with a tact, a shrewdness and common sense, which generally saved it from the worst of its possible reactions. Even while the people were indifferent, his heart, burning within him, would foretell an outpouring of the Spirit, and then he would begin to predict the desired event. Wondering what he could see that made him think anything unusual was about to happen, the people made him think of "hens in the night, when you carry a candle into the hen-roost, opening first one eye and then the other, half asleep." By preaching "cut and thrust, hip and thigh, and not ease off," at last he would bring the prophecy to fulfilment. Lyman Beecher was a natural searcher of the heart, fitted to sway the emotions by the intensity of his convictions and by his sympathetic insight into the secrets of human nature. The very humanness of the man, his love of fun and his unabashed enjoyment of life, helped him also.

There was a temperamental fire in him, a vitality and heartiness, which gave him great power in appeal, and which soon made his name and influence felt beyond the limits of his town and parish.

In after life he wished that he could hear somebody speak as he himself used to at this time. Acknowledging that he "tore a passion to tatters," he yet declared that the power thus generated justified the method. It was not his way, he tells us, to push protracted meetings, but he preached twice on Sunday and exhorted in the evening. The result of this more deliberate procedure was that the movement continued longer, sometimes lasting three or four years.

"I was in full vigor in those years," he says; "lectured sometimes nine times a week, besides going in the mornings to converse with the awakened. I knew nothing about being tired. My heart was warm. I preached with great ease. If any ministers happened along, I did not want them to help me. Did not ask them, not a single one. They would strike forty miles behind." Again he says: "I went home expecting, and word was sent up from the Springs that the Lord had come down on the previous Sunday, and that a meeting was appointed for

Tuesday evening, and I must not disappoint them. I went and preached. I saw one young man with his head down. I wanted to know if it was an arrow of the Almighty. I came along after sermon and laid my hand upon his head. He lifted his face, his eyes all full of tears; I saw it was God. Then I went to the Northwest, and the Lord was there; then to Ammigansett, and the Lord was there; and the flood was rolling all around. Oh, what a time it was!"

And yet insist, as he did, that a real work of the Holy Spirit must ever be an essentially painful experience, Dr. Beecher was equally careful to claim that the evidence of religion must lie "in the mind's consciousness of its own steady, governing purpose, as witnessed by the habitual course of the life." Neither was he given to confusing morbid states of health with normal signs of spiritual awakening. Pious gloom he attributed to physical disorder rather than to the operation of the Holy Ghost, and would often surprise some desponding religious inquirer with questions relating to his bodily condition, prescribing outdoor activity and social diversion for a given period, together with complete absence from religious exercises of any kind. Personal experience, as well as observation of the needs of others, had led him to

study the laws of the nervous system, and he was thus freed from many of the morbid and reactionary tendencies which accompanied the work of Finney and other revivalists of the old school.

As he preached, he had a wonderful alertness of vision for every change in the faces of his audience, while his ready tact and gentleness made him master of the most delicate and difficult situations. It was his pleasure to look upon his work and his method of administering it as curative. As a theologian it was his distinction to have conceived Calvinism as a more positive force, making for cheerful hope and purpose; and as a practical worker, to have seen the constructive and medicinal power of Christian ethics. This, together with his wise observance of the laws of the body, enabled him to speak of his "clinical theology" with a certain correctness. The practical good sense of his position here reminds one of the maxims of Sydney Smith, whom in other ways also he resembled. In words which are almost identical, both clearly defined the difference between piety and dyspepsia at a time when the distinction was seldom recognized and observed.

There was a sermon of Dr. Beecher's preached at East Hampton in the year 1807, and entitled

"The Government of God Desirable," which made a deep impression at the time, and which was repeated with great effect on later occasions. After being delivered before the Synod in Newark in October of 1808, it was published and widely circulated throughout the country. This discourse it was that introduced Lyman Beecher to that larger religious public with which he was by voice and pen to become so great a power. It was a characteristic effort of his mind, alike as showing the heat of conviction in the man, and as indicating that puzzling middle ground in theology which everywhere made friends and enemies for the author and involved him in a lifelong contention.

Of this once famous sermon Dr. Bacon has observed that "a critical eye, familiar with the theological discussions which commenced twenty years later, and in which he was charged with having swerved from certain human standards, discovers in that discourse the identical body of thought which he had learned from the New England divines of the preceding age, and from his own great teacher, Dwight. Yet in that body of thought, and inseparable from it, the same critical eye may discern, unequivocally, the germs, if not the developed ideas, of that 'New School theology' (so called) for which

he was afterward denounced by men who pretended to a higher orthodoxy. . . . Well worthy is that sermon to be ranked with the greatest sermons of the elder Edwards, which it resembles in its solid massiveness of thought and in its terrible earnestness, while it excels them in a certain power of condensed expression which often makes a sentence strike like a thunderbolt."

Throughout his Litchfield pastorate Lyman Beecher was slowly but surely coming into public recognition as a thinker and speaker of more than ordinary power. It had been his reformatory work while at East Hampton, especially in connection with the matter of duelling suggested by the fate of Alexander Hamilton, which had first brought him into notice, but now he was much called away from home as a preacher on occasions, and was more than once favorably considered for prominent pulpits. It seems to have been his desire to remain a humble parish minister at Litchfield, moved thereto by considerations of health and an absence of professional self-seeking, but as the years went on the situation there became strained and burdensome, as had happened before at East Hampton. The people were appreciative and the work successful; but the family had con-

tinued to increase, and the long struggle to obtain a college education for his children, most of whom were boys, had already begun. Worn out with this and many other labors and anxieties, the gentle and devoted wife of his youth had died on September 30, 1816. She left eight children, and a legacy of most tender memories.

Long afterwards her husband said to her children: 'I cannot describe your mother in words. It was not the particular this or that put together would describe Roxana, but a combination such as I never met with but in her.' A year or more after her death he brought home from Portland, Maine, another wife in Harriet Porter, a lady of high connections and many personal attractions whom he had met on a visit to Boston. She proved to be a model wife, and a conscientious, devoted mother to his children. Lyman Beecher never lost a vivid sense of the presence and influence of his first wife, but he also paid the profoundest tribute of appreciation to the graces and virtues of this young lady who came to share his burdens and gladden his home.

There is a charming description of the advent of this new mother on the scene from the pen of Harriet Beecher Stowe: "I was about six years old, and slept in the nursery with my

two younger brothers. We knew that father was gone away somewhere on a journey, and was expected home, and therefore the sound of a bustle or disturbance in the house more easily awoke us. We heard father's voice in the entry, and started up in our little beds, crying out as he entered our room, 'Why, here's pa!' A cheerful voice called out behind him, 'And here's ma!' A beautiful lady, very fair, with light blue eyes, and soft auburn hair bound round with a black velvet bandeau, came into the room smiling, eager, and happy-looking, and, coming up to our beds, kissed us, and told us that she loved little children, and that she would be our mother. We wanted forthwith to get up and be dressed, but she pacified us with the promise that we should find her in the morning.

"Never did mother-in-law make a prettier or sweeter impression. The next morning, I remember, we looked at her with awe. She seemed to us so fair, so delicate, so elegant, that we were almost afraid to go near her. We must have been rough, red-cheeked, hearty country children, honest, obedient, and bashful. She was peculiarly dainty and neat in all her ways and arrangements; and I remember I used to feel breezy and rough and rude in her presence. We felt a little in awe of her, as if she were a

strange princess rather than our own mamma; but her voice was very sweet, her ways of speaking and moving very graceful, and she took us up in her lap and let us play with her beautiful hands, which seemed wonderful things, made of pearl, and ornamented with strange rings."

The situation at Litchfield did not grow easier as time went on. The family burden continued to increase; and finally there came another breakdown in the father's health, occasioned by overwork and domestic cares and sorrows. He gave up study, and went hunting and fishing; and when this did not accomplish the desired result, he tried, though still without improvement, a journey to Niagara. A trip to Maine seemed only to aggravate his trouble; but on the way home, there was a consultation with Dr. Jackson of Boston, which led finally to a solution of his difficulty. He believed himself to be in consumption, and told the physician that he should die if something were not done soon. It proved, however, that he was suffering from nervous dyspepsia, a disease, the patient assured us, never heard of before, and from which he recovered by the prescription of time and a more intelligent way of life. The cure was complete in the spring by the purchase of eight acres of land near his house and a summer's work thereon.

"Hired a man," he says, "bought a yoke of oxen, plow, horse-cart, and went to work every day. I wanted something to do. I needed to breathe the fresh air. . . . I had the alders down at the bottom of the east lot cut up, broke it up, and planted corn and potatoes. Henry and Charles began to help hoe a little. I didn't study a sermon all that summer. There is some advantage in being an extempore speaker. 'Squire Langdon used to say that when he saw me digging potatoes late Saturday night, he expected a good sermon Sunday morning. Slowly but surely I got up. Not one in a hundred would have done it."

Then came another visit to Boston to help in a revival movement in the spring of 1823. He set out on the journey, a man in middle life and now thoroughly seasoned to the work, with a city in view which he looked upon as a veritable wilderness of infidelity, and with obstacles to surmount which would seem well-nigh impassable to-day. "I went on horseback," he says, "starting just after a great snow-storm, before the stage had broken the paths. I rode in cattle paths, sometimes my saddlebags touching the snow on either side." And when at last he reached his destination, his recorded impression of it was that "nobody seemed to have

an idea that there was anything but what God had locked up and frozen from all eternity."

As a result of this visit Dr. Beecher removed to Boston in the early part of 1826, and began his pastorate with the church in Hanover Street. The Litchfield people had been kind, and were still cordial; but there had been differences of opinion and obstructions in his work, which, with the other considerations alluded to before, led to a reluctant separation. Many changes had come during these Litchfield years. The family had already begun to separate. The older boys were at college, and the girls were away from home, teaching. The fame of the preacher had gone out into the world, a fame which had been confirmed by his occasional pulpit utterances, his reformatory labors and his writings. One of his sons, Edward, was approaching the close of his divinity course, and his daughter Catherine was becoming a power in the educational and literary fields. The time was ripe for a change. There were resources in the man which a secluded parish never could have tested, and from this time forth we find him in a larger arena, coping with more imposing forces, and showing to the full limit his capacity for facing and overcoming difficulties. The warrior was now where he best liked to be, in

the midst of the stronghold of liberalism, against which he had already directed so much theological firing at long range. Boston was soon aware that a new explosive threatened its already not too peaceful atmosphere.

CHAPTER III

BOSTON AND THE BATTLE WITH UNITARIANISM

"From the time Unitarianism began to show itself in this country," says Lyman Beecher, "it was as fire in my bones." Everything that appeared relating to the controversy which was then uppermost in New England thought had been eagerly read by him; and on his earlier visit to Boston in 1817 he had exulted in "a chance to strike," which was given him at the ordination of Sereno E. Dwight as pastor of Park Street Church. The sermon which he preached on this occasion on *The Bible a Code of Laws*, created quite a sensation and was considered to be a clear and thoroughgoing defense of Calvinism in a quarter where it had been most successfully questioned.

"My soul is moved within me," he writes home to his daughter on this visit, "that so many of the temples in Boston and around should be

only splendid sepulchers, where the spiritually dead sleep, never to wake till they meet at the judgment seat that Saviour whose divinity and atonement they deny." The battle of the churches had resulted in a victory for liberalism. Dr. Channing had penetrated New England with his quiet but pervasive voice, and had reached far beyond its confines by his writings. The wealth and fashion of Boston were to be found in the Unitarian churches, while the literary men and the professors at Harvard College were all committed to the new way of thinking. The reaction from Calvinism had been sweeping; but, as was but natural, its success had only intensified the forces in opposition and prepared the way for a counter-reaction.

The coming of Dr. Beecher to Boston was hailed in friendly quarters with delight, and great hopes were based upon his championship of the older views. He at once entered upon a course of controversy from which his life was henceforth seldom free. The sense of being continually under theological fire lends a belligerent tone to his writings and addresses. He had come, as a skilful campaigner, to rally and solidify the forces of orthodoxy. "The Baptists came to see what was going on," he says, "and pretty soon they began to revive. When I first

set up evening meetings not a bell tingled ; but after a few weeks, not a bell that didn't tingle. The Unitarians at first scouted evening meetings ; but Ware found his people going, and set up a meeting. I used to laugh to hear the bells going all round."

Presently his son Edward comes to join him in the work as pastor of Park Street Church, and then the father's heart is full. There are many pleasant pictures of the preacher in his new environment from which the lurid lights of controversy have gone out, and in which the genial, lovable qualities of the man come out. At first the change to city life was afflictive in many ways. Lyman Beecher was essentially a natural man, with a love of outdoor things and a dependence upon fresh air which ill accorded with his new surroundings. The brooding village streets and the home garden had been left behind, and a period of physical suffering and great mental depression intervened. The only remedy he could think of was to have a load of sand carted into his cellar, which he shoveled from one side to the other to quiet his nerves. A wood-pile was afterward set up in the back yard, together with parallel bars and other simple gymnastic apparatus, whereby he managed to work off the mental tension and restore his

spirits. In those days it was a matter of surprise when clerical visitors beheld a brother minister climbing ropes hand over hand, turning over on the single bar, and evidently taking as much delight in his physical as in his intellectual powers. But in this, as in many other matters pertaining to the care of the body, Dr. Beecher was something of a pioneer, and always independent. Against the east winds of Boston, and the subtler atmospheric effects of a sedentary life, he guarded himself by a care of diet, rest and exercise which suggests the scientific methods of a later time. By these means he was able to recover his poise and accomplish with an ever-increasing ease a marvelous amount of work, until in all the later years of his life we hear no more of the physical limitations which beset him earlier in his course.

It was his custom to spend an hour or two with his children after evening service, "letting himself run down," as he expressed it. This was a season of joke and story, brimming over with laughter and fun; and then would come down the old violin, and the venerable yellow music-book, which had accompanied him in his serious labors from the first, and the children's favorites would follow, *Auld Lang Syne*, *Bonnie Doon* and *Mary's Dream*, to be capped with their

special delight, a contra dance entitled "Go to the devil and shake yourself." Money Musk and College Hornpipe, we are told, were too much for him, although he persisted in the attempt to master them. The picture is further completed by the account of those rarer occasions when, the mother having gone early to bed, he could be induced by the youngsters to give them a specimen of the double-shuffle which he danced in his youth on the barn floor at huskings. It was the effect of these exercises upon the feet of his stockings which made them so unpopular with the domestic chief, but they successfully served his purpose of "letting off steam gradually" and enabling him after his Sunday efforts to sleep like a child.

There is a characteristic description of his method of getting to church on Sunday morning which is given us by his daughter, Mrs. Stowe. "If he was to preach in the evening, he was to be seen all day talking with whoever would talk, accessible to all, full of everybody's affairs, business and burdens, till an hour or two before the time, when he would rush up into his study (which he always preferred should be the topmost room of the house), and, throwing off his coat, after a swing or two with the dumb-bells to settle the balance of his muscles, he

would sit down and dash ahead, making quantities of hieroglyphic notes on small, stubbed bits of paper, about as big as the palm of his hand. The bells would begin to ring, and still he would write. They would toll loud and long, and his wife would say, 'He will certainly be late,' and there would be running up and down stairs of messengers to see that he was finished, till, just as the last stroke of the bell was dying away, he would emerge from the study with coat very much awry, coming down the stairs like a hurricane, stand impatiently protesting while female hands that ever lay in wait adjusted his cravat and settled his coat collar, calling loudly for a pin to fasten together the stubbed little bits of paper aforesaid, which being duly dropped into the crown of his hat, and hooking wife or daughter like a satchel on his arm, away he would start on such a race through the streets as left neither brain nor breath till the church was gained. Then came the process of getting in through crowded aisles, wedged up with heads, the bustle, and stir, and hush to look at him, as, with a matter-of-fact, businesslike push, he elbowed his way through them and up the pulpit stairs."

Beecher's preaching at this time was full of vigor and power, and it reached out into the

neighborhood around Boston, and, on occasions, far beyond. There were special sermons to young men and to business men, which made a deep impression. The six sermons on temperance were rewritten, and given with great effect. "My young men," he says, "were for having them printed. Marvin did it well, and a number of editions were sold. Then the Tract Society bought the copyright. They offered fifty dollars, but I said they ought to give a hundred, and they did. These sermons made a racket all around, more than I had any idea they would. They stirred up the drinkers and venders all over the city. There was a great ebullition of rage among a certain class. And from that commenced a series of efforts among my people and others in Boston to promote this reform."

His interest in young men was never more manifest than now, and he was soon surrounded by a group of promising young supporters of the church who were attracted by the aggressive, positive character of his preaching and by the youthfulness of feeling which made one of his greatest elements of power. These young men afterward became leaders of orthodox Congregationalism in New England and were among the best fruits of his labors.

The feeling of resentment against Unitarians

for their success in retaining many of the old first churches of New England was at its height when Lyman Beecher came to Boston, and it found no more doughty champion than he. Nothing was too bad or too bitter for him to say against this offending sect which had dared to question the foundations of orthodoxy. He charged them with political chicanery and with suborning the courts. He failed utterly to see that, with all their limitations, these people were at least honest, and that lack of denominational aggressiveness rather than corporate ambition was their defect. Doubtless Dr. Beecher would have accomplished more in a strictly sectarian way if he could have had his own denomination with him; but as time went on there were evidences of weakness in his own religious fellowship which greatly troubled him, and which finally made him ready to turn his thoughts in other directions. The valiant warrior, after rallying the forces of orthodoxy and forecasting a victory for them, had to stand by and see them scattered and rendered ineffective by internal dissension. For thirty-five years the New England ministers had been united, and their people had come into that "solid, tranquil, scriptural state" from which the speculative tendencies of a later time were now about to awake them.

Massachusetts had been the one exception. During that period, while Connecticut, according to Dr. Beecher, had been "quiet as a clock," her sister state had been "a region of *original geniuses*, every man having his '*psalm*' and his '*doctrine*,' every man putting forth his '*Bible news*,' or his book in some form, to show that he was an independent thinker." But now while here the Armenians and Calvinists and Hopkinsians had sunk their differences and presented a solid front against liberalism in religion, Connecticut had begun to show signs of division, and the questioning spirit was threatening to spread across the border.

"It were vain," he writes, "to hope that all this alarm will subside in a few months, and that Unitarians will never learn the secret that we are divided. It were vain to hope that any change touching the vital points of New England orthodoxy can be accomplished silently, or can be accomplished at all, without public discussion. The thing has gone thus to its '*ne plus*' from a dread of division; but push it further, and a battle royal is inevitable."

The "battle royal," however, never really came off, for the reason already indicated, that the controversial forces, upon which the writer was relying, could not be massed at any one point

in sufficient strength to promise any adequate result from the encounter. About this time the thoughts of Dr. Beecher and his own people were diverted by a calamity which befell the fortress from which much of this theological warfare was to proceed. In the early part of the year 1830 the church in Hanover Street was burned to the ground, with the effect of breaking into the plans already formed and of calling his attention to other fields of labor which were looking to him as a recognized leader. During the rest of his stay in Boston Dr. Beecher preached in Salem Church, an offshoot of his own parish which had sprung up at the North End.

Among the invitations to settle elsewhere which came to him at about this time was one from Philadelphia which particularly appealed to him, but which, with the others, he declined. There was only one locality which would have tempted him to leave Boston, he afterward declared, and that was the West, which the religious workers in the East were beginning to feel must be brought under the right kind of influences before it was too late. The story of the founding of Lane Theological Seminary at Walnut Hills, just out of Cincinnati, Ohio, is a long and depressing one, made up of many petty de-

tails and by no means trifling discouragements. Lyman Beecher had early been selected as the one person who could make the enterprise a success, but the invitation that he should become the first president of the school was at first declined. He shared heartily in the feeling that a theological rallying-point was needed in the newly opening West, but he could not then see his way clear to leave Boston. As time went on, and the project met with lengthening difficulties, the proposal was renewed, this time with better effect. Dr. Beecher was known to be of a buoyant, trustful, adventurous spirit, which easily subordinated hardship in the pursuit of ideal ends. Then his wide reputation, and especially his persuasive influence with people of means throughout the East, confirmed the impression that the life of the project depended upon him. The negotiations were long-drawn-out, but at last all obstacles were removed, and he stood finally committed to the new work which was to round out by a long and arduous service the labors of a lifetime. With his customary ardor he at once threw himself into the undertaking, soliciting funds and making friends for the institution with which for the next twenty years he was to be closely identified. Difficulties which would have daunted most men attended

him from the outset, and did not lessen as the years went on. There never was any time when the full resources of the man were not tested in the effort to stem the many hostile influences which beset the school from the beginning, but he met them all unflinchingly, and indeed developed through all these troubled years an increasing strength and sweetness of character.

The difficulty which met him here was the one which he had found in his work as a parish minister. "‘The grand difficulty is,’ he wrote," in quotation of another, "‘the churches do nothing—only willing to be boosted.’ This may be, but it is a fault very common in most churches. What did I do at Litchfield but to ‘boost?’ They all lay on me, and moved very little except as myself and God moved them. I spent six years of the best years of my life at a dead lift in boosting. I could not get my salary paid quarterly or half yearly. I could not and did not get a vestry, but held conferences in that old West Schoolhouse, dark and dirty, lighted with candles begged or contributed among the neighbors, and stuck up on the walls with old forks, and at last we grew so liberal and extravagant as to buy half a dozen tin things to hang on the walls and put candles in. I cannot revert to the scene without shuddering. My soul hath it in

remembrance, and is humbled within me." Such had been the preparation for the most herculean task of boosting ever laid upon his powers.

The trials of a decision having been surmounted, those of the journey to what was then a remote and inaccessible West followed. The family arrived in Cincinnati on November 14, 1832; and on the October 6th preceding Mrs. Stowe writes to a friend from New York where its progress had been arrested.

"I forgot to tell you that we are staying at Mr. Henry Tallmadge's, son of our good colonel. Mother and her tribe are at Mr. T—'s. Father is to perform to-night in the Chatham Theatre, 'positively for the *last* time this season.' I don't know, I'm sure, as we shall ever get to Pittsburg. Father is staying here begging money for the Biblical Literature professorship; the incumbent is to be C. Stowe. He called yesterday on S. Van Renssalaer, and made such representations as induced him to subscribe a thousand dollars on the spot. They had really quite an affecting time, by all accounts; but, as I cannot tell you as father told us, you must lose it. How long we are to stay here nobody knows. Father says we are in the hands of Providence, but mother and Aunt Esther seem to demur, and think they should rather trust

Providence by the way. . . . Last night we had a call from Arthur Tappan and Mr. Eastman. Father begged two thousand dollars yesterday, and now the good people are praying him to abide certain days, as he succeeds so well. They are talking of sending us off and keeping him here. I really dare not go and see Aunt Esther and mother now; they were in the depths of tribulation before at staying so long, and now

‘In the lowest depth, *another* deep!’

Father has been this morning in high spirits. He is all in his own element—dipping into books—consulting authorities for his oration—going around here, there, and everywhere—begging, borrowing, and spoiling the Egyptians—delighted with past success, and confident of the future.”

By October 18th they were at Philadelphia, but not without further unforeseen friction and delay. The family baggage having been carried to the wrong wharf, they were obliged to proceed without it, leaving one of the sons, George, to look it up. The trunks were recovered at Philadelphia, and then the journey was continued, with stops at Dowington, Pa., at Harrisburg, and at Wheeling, Va., at which latter

place a steamboat was to have been taken to their destination. They had crossed the mountains to Wheeling in eight days, an average daily staging of forty-four miles; and now the reported presence of cholera in Cincinnati induced another delay of eight days, during which Dr. Beecher preached eleven times. Another stay at Granville, Ohio, to hold protracted meetings, and give the dreaded disease a chance to abate, another stage journey over corduroy roads, made of logs laid crosswise, and the pilgrims were at rest in the city to which their thoughts had been for so long a time turning.

Happily they did not come altogether as strangers, for Cincinnati was at this time more than half a New England city, with many people in it who were more or less connected with the Beecher family. It seemed to Catherine at first as if everybody she used to know were there, and others kept coming as time went on. There were two uncles, one of whom welcomed them to his home on their arrival, several cousins, old neighbors and parishioners, besides acquaintances and friends. The whole tone of the place was Eastern rather than Western; for although since Dr. Beecher began his ministry Cincinnati had grown up from a village of five hundred inhabitants to a city containing two

colleges, twenty-three churches, and fifty-three common schools, yet nearly all traces of newness had passed away. New England ways and New England people were everywhere in evidence; with the result in the case of the newcomers that they always at once felt themselves at home.

CHAPTER IV

LANE SEMINARY

Lane Seminary had come into existence through a gift of sixty acres of land about two miles outside the city of Cincinnati, in a region known as Walnut Hills, to which a few thousand dollars were added, four thousand of which came from the man whose name it bears. The charter was granted in 1829. At the time of the arrival of the first president, very little had been done in the way of a beginning. The available funds were altogether inadequate for the purposes of the school, and there was much opposition as well as indifference to contend with. The location was a most fortunate one, and is described by the daughter, even at this early stage of its development, as a possible paradise. The city and the river were, indeed, to her disappointment, shut away, but otherwise the views were delightful. Both the Seminary building and the new home were set in a

grove of fine trees to which the family became much attached, and which seemed to bring back into the life of Lyman Beecher the element of nature which he had so much missed in going to Boston.

Already, before coming hither, he had outlined to the board his conception of what a theological school ought to be. "I should exceedingly deprecate," he writes, "the annual drilling of a class one year in Biblical literature, the next in theology, and lastly in composition and eloquence—one stratum of knowledge piled on another, without any cement between; about as wise as if a man should eat his meat one day, and his vegetables the next, and his pies and cake on the third. My desire would be to blend the united services of all the professors in raising up the student to a perfect man, that 'all the body fitly framed, having nourishment ministered and knit together, might increase with the increase of God.'

"I think it highly important that the theological instructor should, if possible, sustain the pastoral relation, and the students worship with him in a popular assembly—that while in the acquisition of doctrine they might witness its application, and feel its power, and observe its effect. How can the full and warm tide of

piety be maintained in the hearts of students shut up to be preached to, and to preach to one another, without the variety of instruction and social influence which appertains to a popular assembly? The soul of eloquence is *feeling*, and in the ministry *holy* feeling; but feeling without social excitement is impossible, and all eloquence unprompted by it is but parrot eloquence, alike offensive to God and man. Of all the mistakes made by great and good men, that of shutting up theological students on the Sabbath in a chapel, to be edified by classical accuracy at the expense of feeling and untrammelled eloquence, is one of the greatest—a kind of preaching having no more relation to that for which they should be preparing, than a sham fight with friends bears to a real battle.”

It was quite in accordance with this conception of his new office that he was forced by the exigencies of the situation to still carry on the functions of a settled pastor. Upon his arrival in Cincinnati Dr. Beecher preached in the Second (Presbyterian) Church to crowded houses, and soon he was invited to the pastorate, with the understanding that the society would be satisfied with such service as did not interfere with his work in the Seminary. This was an ideal arrangement, both from the personal

standpoint, and from that of the school, which could not of itself furnish him with an adequate support. The Second Church was considered the best in the city, and with the exception of one man's family, had welcomed him with heartiness and unanimity. That man, Dr. Wilson, had opposed him from the first on doctrinal grounds, and was destined to play an important part in his after history. Dr. Beecher tried in every way to ignore differences and win over this enemy; only to find in the event that there was no way but to meet him in the open in actual battle. And so in a double field the new life made a most promising beginning. "As for father," writes his daughter Catherine, "I never saw such a field of usefulness and influence as is offered him here. I see no difficulties or objections."

There were, however, difficulties in waiting sufficient to test the resources of even a man as strong and devoted as was Lyman Beecher. Besides the obstacles which came inevitably to an institution poorly endowed and remote from the centers of thought, there soon developed a succession of trials peculiar to the time and conditions under which the enterprise was inaugurated. All sorts of agitations were in the air, and all of them were found to be more

or less hostile to the prosperity of the school. In the early days of Dr. Beecher's presidency there was an outbreak of cholera, which carried off some of the students, and seriously retarded the growth of the Seminary for a time. The strain put upon the president and his family by this tragic experience was very great, and in the case of his wife its effects were never thrown off. She was of a sensitive organization, which had gradually weakened under the strenuous conditions of her life as wife and mother; the long and tedious journey had told on her already failing strength; and now she was to sink under the horrors of a situation which called out all her sympathies and overtaxed her powers of endurance.

She died in July, 1835, and as she lay on her death-bed at home, with only two weeks longer to live, her husband was engaged in a long-drawn-out trial before his Presbytery, charged by Dr. Wilson, his one disaffected parishioner, with teaching false doctrine. The early controversial history of Presbyterianism in this country has long ago passed out of sight, and it is doubtful if it can ever be made interesting to the average reader again. Suffice it to say here that from the first it had illustrated that conflict of tendencies which appears in the

history of every form of religious teaching. The Confession of 1729 had marked a compromise, based upon the acceptance of the Bible as the only standard of faith. But the final outcome of the great awakening under Whitefield and Edwards had been to liberate the forces which made for greater freedom in thought and independence in organization. This reaction went on under the plan of union of 1801, until the counter reaction set in which involved Lyman Beecher and his theological sympathizers in all the evils of unfriendly criticism, not to say persecution. Following the leadership of his revered teacher, Dr. Dwight, he had committed himself to the New School doctrine, that moral freedom and accountability were consistent with the Calvinistic insistence on innate sin, and had thereby brought down upon his head the vigorous denunciation of adherents of the Old School. Dr. Wilson belonged to this school, and it was through his persistent efforts that his pastor was cited before the Presbytery, after his failure to have a committee appointed to examine his writings. He rose, Dr. Beecher tells us, toward the close of the session held in November, 1834, and preferred charges against him; thereby causing him to laugh in his sleeve, and say to himself, "You think you know more

of Presbyterian management than I do, but I have as much common sense as you have, and have attended several ecclesiastical trials in my day, and all those councils and consociations in Connecticut were not for nothing."

When the case came on in June, 1835, in his own church, Dr. Beecher tells us, with evident enjoyment of the situation, how he sat on the second stair of the pulpit, his books and references around him, looking so meek and quiet that his students, who had come to see their teacher acquit himself, began to fear for the result. The ground of attack was the abandoning of standards, which charge the defendant refuted by giving what he considered the correct interpretation, subject to the final revision of the General Assembly. He again appealed to the General Assembly in answer to the charge that he claimed the right to reconstruct the Creeds after his own fashion. The accusation was several times repeated, and as often challenged, until Dr. Wilson lost his patience, and complained of being interrupted and hindered. This called out the reply:

"Dr. Wilson, this is the third time you have misrepresented me, and I shall correct you till you put it right. You shall not go ahead from this point till you do it." . . . "He did not

know what he undertook," was his further comment. "I knew to a hair's breadth every point between Old School and New School, and knew all their difficulties, and how to puzzle them with them. In Presbytery he had only inferior men on his side. He knew they were fools. Two of them had been sitting all their lives on goose-eggs till they rotted under them. There was not another man equal to Wilson on his side, nor anywhere near to it. On our side the trial was as strong as possible, and everybody exulted with great exultation. . . . Presbytery acquitted me, and he appealed to Synod. . . . When I got there (to the Synod) and looked around, I thought the vote would run very close. My Presbytery, being appealed from, could not vote. The Old School had raked and scraped all the old dead churches where they could get an elder, and thought they might carry the day. It looked squally. When Wilson got up and made his speech—the best he ever did make, as he misrepresented things—it made the issue look dubious. The house grew dark; it didn't look dark to me; I knew what artillery I had got; I had some letters of his as a kind of masked battery. But there was an Old School majority, and his speech made a *sensation*. There was one time, though,

he came near getting over-set; it came near terminating the trials. In his argument before Presbytery he had said that man has *no ability of any kind* to obey God's commands. I told him then he was the first man I ever knew to march boldly up to that without flinching, and I praised his courage. But the fact was, that did not set well on Princeton. They wrote to him. He found he had gone too far; it was too rank. He undertook to change front. He went on, and changed his phraseology, and stated what he did hold. I jumped up and said, 'Dr. Wilson, that is precisely what I believe; let's have no more trials; give me your hand!' He was astounded—hung back. We adjourned till afternoon, and it lacked but a hair's breadth of his giving up the case. When my turn came, I went from one point to another, and by and by the tide turned; and when the time came to vote, there was a majority against him of ten to one."

Dr. Wilson again appealed to the General Assembly, which convened in Pittsburg in May, 1836. Beecher, by sending reports of his trial to be distributed in the Pittsburg Synod, secured an opinion favorable to his case, which was sufficiently manifest to cause his antagonist to withdraw suit on the third day of the

session. Dr. Beecher did not at first give his consent, but rose and, after declaring his readiness for trial, claimed the right to have his persecutor treated as he himself would have been if condemned. He did not, however, insist on this; nor did he know till some time later the cause of the consternation which ensued upon his counter proposition. The fact was that the friends of Dr. Wilson had deprecated the trial, fearing to commit the General Assembly to the views which Beecher was sure to establish under the Confession, especially as he had already drawn his proofs from admissions which the Old School had been forced to make in the published discussions between Princeton and New Haven. Lyman Beecher claimed this trial as one of his greatest blessings, since it afforded him an opportunity of twice expounding the Confession as he understood it, and of clearly stating his own position with relation to it. Nor was he without hope that the effect upon the churches East and West, which had long been torn with controversy, would be tranquilizing. His enjoyment of the situation is evident, and there are side-lights of his character which come out here as nowhere else. Believing, as he did, that the Confession of Faith was all that was needed, he gladly rushed to the defense of his

views, none the less delighted because he was sharply challenged and because all his varied powers were called out by the issue.

There is an account of his setting out to attend the Synod by his son, Henry Ward, who attended him, which throws further light upon the peculiarities of the man. It was dated Canal-boat, Wednesday, October 14, 1835.

"You who live remote from Walnut Hills, have, notwithstanding, heard something of one of our stars, *Lyman Beecher*. But, though of note as a public character, he is not less famous and interesting in private life. Indeed, we who see him daily, imagine that he exhibits more unequivocal marks of genius in the domestic than in a wider sphere; for in the pulpit (thanks to the attention of Aunt Esther) he wears whole stockings, has decent handkerchiefs and cravats, a tidy coat, and never wears one boot and one shoe together; and in his published works, who can see, through the type, either the manuscript or the writer? But in his family, and unmolested by feminine pertinacity of neatness, his genius peeps forth in various negligences of apparel, particularly his shirt sleeves, open bosom, and ample display of flannel. As if to put the broadest seal upon his genius, Nature seems to have ordained that he study half undressed.

"But if we admire these marks of innate ability which appear on the exterior, no less are we surprised at those which he exhibits as a business man. Let me give you a sketch of our departure for Dayton. Having several weeks for preparation, he felt secure, and made no attempt at a beginning till the day before. Then, while cutting up stumps in the garden, he fell upon a *plan* for his defense, which was indicated to us by his precipitate retreat from his stump to his study. In the afternoon he dragged me away six miles in an excess of patriotism to deposit his *vote*. Before going to bed, he charged me to be up early, for he must get ready, and the boat was to start at nine.

"The morning opened on a striking scene. As I emerged from my room, the doctor was standing in his study doorway, a book under each arm, with a third in hands, in which he was searching for quotations. In an hour and a half all his papers were to be collected (and from whence?), books assorted, breakfast eaten, clothes packed and horse harnessed. After a hasty meal, whew! he goes up-stairs, opens every drawer, and paws over all the papers, leaving them in confusion, and down-stairs again to the drawers in his study, which are treated in like manner. He fills his arms with books,

and papers, and sermons, and straightway seems to forget what he wanted them for, for he falls to assorting them vigorously *de novo*.

“‘Eight o’clock, and not half ready. Boat starts at nine.’

“‘Where’s my Burton?’

“‘Father, I have found the Spirit of the Pilgrims.’

“‘Don’t want it. Where did I put that paper of extracts? Can’t you make out another? Where did I lay my opening notes? Here, Henry, put this book in the carriage. Stop! give it to me. Let’s see—run up stairs for my Register. No, no! I’ve brought it down.’

“‘Half past eight. Not ready. Three miles to go. Horse not up.

“At length the doctor completes his assortment of books and papers, packs, or rather stuffs his clothes into a carpet bag—no key to lock it—ties the handles, and leaves it gaping. At length we are ready to start. A trunk tumbles out of one side as Thomas tumbles in the other. I reverse the order—tumble Tom out, the trunk in. At length all are aboard, and father drives out of the yard, holding the reins in one hand, shaking hands with a student with the other, giving Charles directions with his mouth—at least that part not occupied with an apple; for,

since apples were plenty, he has made it a practice to drive with one rein in the right hand, and the other in the left, with an apple in each, biting them alternately, thus raising and lowering the reins like threads on a loom. Away we go, Charley horse on a full canter down the long hill, the carriage bouncing and bounding over the loose stones, father alternately telling Thomas how to get the harness mended, and showing me the true doctrine of original sin. Hurrah! We thunder alongside the boat just in time."

CHAPTER V

AS A REFORMER

In the struggle for existence, Lane Seminary had to contend with more than epidemics of disease among the students, and heresy trials as affecting the standing of the faculty. The air at this time was full of agitations, and the ferment of changing opinion touching matters which involved the strongest prejudice could not but be detrimental to an institution which from the first had needed every favoring influence. Most of all was it to suffer from that anti-slavery conflict which was already beginning, and which found its earliest and most marked expressions in the region round about Cincinnati.

With this movement Lyman Beecher was, and was not, in sympathy. There were features of it which did not appeal to him, and yet he was by instinct and the habit of a lifetime a reformer. As far back as the East Hampton days he had begun his career as a moral agitator in

the sermon on the death of Alexander Hamilton, which had really been his introduction to public notice. This sermon had a wide circulation in print, and finally led to the passing of a law against duelling by Congress during the Jackson administration. The Democrats printed an edition of 40,000 copies in the Clay campaign and distributed them throughout the North.

Dr. Bacon said that this sermon "has never ceased to be a power in the politics of this country. More than anything else it made the name of brave old Andrew Jackson distasteful to the moral and religious feeling of the people. It hung like a millstone on the neck of Henry Clay." From this "great national sin," Lyman Beecher, back in the East Hampton days, turned to the general state of public morals, especially with reference to the treatment of the Indians, to Sabbath-breaking, and to intemperance. The magnitude of the change effected by his efforts in the latter direction can hardly be appreciated by one not familiar with the habits of the American people a century ago. Dr. Beecher himself has left many references to the drinking customs of his day, especially among the clergy and on religious occasions, which from our modern standpoint justify all the indignation and sense of outrage with which they then affected his

mind. But, up to his time, these things had attracted little attention, and the degree of sensitiveness which his allusions to them developed showed how strongly entrenched the use of liquor and the feeling for its indulgence had become.

When at Litchfield, he went to the ordination of a young minister at Plymouth, and found a broad sideboard covered with bottles and decanters, at which the people stood awaiting their chance to drink. The crowding was so great that there was difficulty in serving all; while later, at dinner, and during the afternoon and evening, the drinking went on, till the sideboard, "with the spillings of water and sugar, and liquor, looked and smelled like the bar of a very active grog-shop." Later, pipes were taken up, and the place was soon so blue with tobacco smoke that one could not see. Then the flood of noisy and hilarious talk rose to its height, till the old Puritan tradition, and especially that part of it which applied to Connecticut "blue-law" strictness, was entirely disproved. "Great deal of spirituality on Sabbath," was Dr. Beecher's comment, "and not much when they got where there was something good to drink." A comment which may easily be misunderstood, but which points to a state of things which

others besides the one who made it were coming to look upon as unbearable. The clergy simply reflected the prevailing standards and customs in regard to the use of liquor, and the statement is made that no drunkenness, but only exhilaration, resulted.

Going soon to another ordination, Mr. Beecher tells us that the same scenes were re-enacted; and while others ventured on remark, he, stirred to his very soul, prepared for war. Vowing to God that he would never go to another ordination of this sort, he declared that the day of compromise was over. When he had gone to the Plymouth occasion, his position was known, but he was not ready to strike. Nor was his wise, conciliatory policy without effect, for it brought to his side many among the ministers who at this time could not have been won in any other way. "If you had made the least effort to govern us young men," remarked the candidate for ordination on this occasion, "you would have had a swarm of bees about you; but as you have come and mixed among us, you can do with us what you will."

Committees had been appointed both by the General Association of Connecticut and by that of Massachusetts to inquire into this evil, and see if anything could be done to abate it. At

a joint meeting held in Sharon, June, 1812, Mr. Beecher was present as a member. He listened to the report, to the effect that, while intemperance was alarmingly on the increase, no remedy on the most prayerful investigation had suggested itself to the committee; and then he rose and with a hot heart moved the appointment of another committee of three to report before the session adjourned some ways and means of arresting the tide of intemperance. The result was that, as chairman of this committee, he brought in on the next day a report which he considered the most important composition of his life. As an instrument inaugurating the first definite and concerted action in temperance reform, it certainly has a peculiar significance. The document set forth the alarming extent to which habits of drinking had fastened on the community, and the dire consequences which were visible on every hand, and the following recommendations were made:

“1. Appropriate discourses on the subject by all ministers of Association.

2. The District Associations abstain from the use of ardent spirits at ecclesiastical meetings.

3. That members of Churches abstain from the unlawful vending, or purchase and use of ardent spirits where unlawfully sold; exercise

vigilant discipline, and cease to consider the production of ardent spirits a part of hospitable entertainment in social visits.

4. That parents cease from the ordinary use of ardent spirits in the family, and warn their children of the evils and dangers of intemperance.

5. That farmers, mechanics and manufacturers substitute palatable and nutritious drinks, and give additional compensation, if necessary, to those in their employ.

6. To circulate documents on the subject, especially a sermon by Rev. E. Porter, and a pamphlet by Dr. Rush.

7. To form voluntary associations to aid the civil magistrate in the execution of the law."

The report ended with a searching appeal to ministers, members of churches and all persons to unite in creating a better standard of belief and practice in the matter in hand; and, on being presented and discussed, it was adopted, and a thousand copies ordered to be printed. Considering the novel character of the measures urged at this time, the amount of inertia to be overcome, and the hearty way in which they were entered into, it seems no wonder that their author felt a sense of exhilaration over his success. Warned by his good friend Dr. Dwight

against the danger of precipitancy, he was able to declare that he was not headstrong, only *heartstrong*; and that, too, with a great zest and assurance. For had he not read and studied everything on the subject which he could find? And had he not refrained, in the best interest of the whole cause, from any present mention of wine-drinking? It was a habit, however, which he and many others from this time forth discontinued in their homes.

When, in his old age, Lyman Beecher looked back upon the fruits of this action, he felt like crying, Glory to God! "Oh, how it wakes my old heart up to think of it! though hearts never do grow old, do they? . . . All my expectations were more than realized. The next year we reported to the Association that the effect had been most salutary. Ardent spirits were banished from ecclesiastical meetings; ministers had preached on the subject; the churches generally had approved the design; the use of spirits in families and private circles had diminished; the attention had been awakened; the tide of public opinion had turned; farmers and mechanics had begun to disuse spirits; the Legislature had taken action in favor of the enterprise; a society for Reformation of Morals had been established, and ecclesiastical bodies

in other states had commenced efforts against the common enemy."

Such was in part the preparation which had shaped Lyman Beecher into a sympathizer with the efforts to shake off the yoke of slavery which were increasingly made during his presidency of Lane Seminary, and with which in the years to follow, the members of his family, especially Harriet and Henry Ward, were to be so prominently identified. With the anti-slavery movement he was heartily in accord, although, as already indicated, he distrusted some of the more extreme phases of the agitation. As he himself said, he never was one of those "he-goat men, who think they do God service by butting everything in the line of their march, which does not fall in or get out of the way."

The trustees of the Seminary, however, were pronounced in their opposition to any abolition talk or action on the part of the students, who had become deeply interested in the movement. The first class of forty, all mature, strong and devoted men, formed themselves into an Abolition Society against the advice of the faculty. Hoping that by a wise regulation of enthusiasm and an avoidance of extreme expressions, unfavorable results might be averted, President Beecher, his son-in-law, Professor

Stowe, and the others went on their summer vacation. During their absence the trustees adopted resolutions calling for a strict suppression of all anti-slavery agitation within the limits of the School. Societies or associations among the students were to be prohibited, as well as all public meetings, discussions or addresses upon the troublesome topic. It was forbidden even to dwell upon the subject at meals or in ordinary conversation. Especially was the Anti-slavery Society, already existing, to be at once abandoned on pain of dismissal from the seminary.

Dr. Beecher arrived home just too late to prevent the enactment of these rules, and the withdrawal of the students in a body. There was apparently a feeling on the part of the trustees that the faculty could not quite be depended on in the matter, and that the sentiment which they desired to create should be summarily set forth for them on the threshold of the new year, so that no misunderstanding and no mistake, fatal to the existence of the school, might be made. The funds upon which the enterprise depended were in jeopardy, and friendly support threatened to fall away with the first hint that Lane Seminary was becoming a hotbed of anti-slavery agitation.

This action of the trustees well-nigh ended

in the closing of the school, a result which was avoided only through the good sense and generalship of its president. Feeling deeply the injustice and lack of wisdom on the part of those who had passed the resolutions, he held firm to his endeavor of keeping the students together, and tiding the seminary over this new difficulty which had started up in its way. At one time he thought of resigning, but hoping that the trustees would modify their action, he devoted himself to inducing the rebellious students to return in the same spirit to their places. Most of them, however, became members of a new theological department in Oberlin College, established at this time and largely to meet this emergency. Lane Seminary struggled on for a time with great difficulty. The radical press of the country labeled it "pro-slavery," and talked about the oppression of the Bastile and spiritual Inquisition whenever it was mentioned. But the characterization, so far as the president and faculty were concerned, was unfair. The students themselves never for a moment doubted Dr. Beecher. They knew that his heart was right, and that, if the matter had been left in his hands, their conscience might have been respected without any break in the order and prosperity of the school.

For years the effects of this unfortunate affair were felt, and the mark of the struggle to offset it were upon its chief sufferer to the end of his days. A less elastic nature than his, one less resourceful and enduring would have relinquished the struggle long before he did. For over twenty years he remained at his post. From 1836 to 1840 the classes averaged only five. Disappointments and difficulties succeeded each other; but though friends withdrew and enemies increased, though fellow professors became discouraged and salaries and endowments disappeared, his son-in-law, Professor Stowe, tells us that he worked like a Hercules and never lost his hopefulness and serenity. Persistent, resourceful, courageous, "if he could not clamber over an obstacle, he would go round it or dig through it; if he was disappointed in one thing, he would hope for another which would be surely better when he got it. Nothing ever really hurt him but the supposed treachery of trusted friends; this would go to his heart and make him sigh. In every tight place he would say, 'Come, let us get by this pinch, and then we'll have plain sailing.' I never believed him, and sometimes expressed my dissent in terms rather emphatic than befitting. I was so often right in my apprehensions

that after a few years he changed his mode of address to me, and would say, 'Come, Stowe, let us get by this pinch, and then we'll get ready for the next,' but always with the same good-humored hopefulness."

Dr. Beecher himself has said in the same vein: "There was one time there were no students offering for our next class. Stowe was discouraged; Dickenson had a call at Auburn; Biggs had a chance at Woodward College. I went up to Marietta College, born after us, and saw the faculty and students. There I secured four or five. Had an invitation to lecture at Jacksonville. Went down to Louisville on my way, and spent a Sabbath. Got one student there. He was a member of my church in Boston; he was in business. I told him to study and he did. Then I went to Jacksonville, and there I found six. One of them was expecting to be a teacher. I got hold of him—excited his interest. I told him, 'Come on and bring these young men, and I'll support ye.' And I saw it done. Well, when I got back to the seminary I found Stowe sick abed, and all discouraged. Said 'twas all over—of no use—might just as well leave and go back East first as last. 'Stowe,' said I, 'I've brought ye twelve students. You've got no faith, and I've got nothing but

faith. Get up, and wash, and eat bread, and prepare to have a good class.' The consequence was a class of thirteen, and the next year thirty-five."

In that saying, "and I have nothing but faith," Lyman Beecher touched on a most characteristic truth. In no way had he shown his strength more than in that elemental sort of confidence, that he who acts with an eye single to ideal ends, may count on the divine guidance and help, which lies at the heart of all true religion. Many times had his life most signally illustrated and confirmed this faith for him, in places where no light appeared, such as the leaving East Hampton and Litchfield, and where in a strangely providential manner the way was made plain before him.

CHAPTER VI

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The crisis at last came which indicated the close of Dr. Beecher's long and untiring labors in behalf of Lane Seminary. For twenty years he had borne its burdens and fought its battles, besides contending with very trying conditions which were peculiarly his own. All this, with the approach of old age, had gradually told upon his powers of resistance. Some time before resigning the theological professorship, in 1843, in fact, he had severed his connection with the Second Church. Three years later a summer's trip to England had been made possible to him through the generosity of friends. The occasion which had, for the first time in his life, drawn his thoughts thither was the Temperance Convention, to which was added afterwards the Christian Alliance to be held in London. Although no way was in sight for the gratification of the sudden desire which sprang up within

him to be present and take part in these conventions, it was characteristic of the man that he determined to go. It was a part of the education in the ways of devout trust which his life had given him to believe that, with the feeling which overpowered him, means of carrying it out would be provided. One thing after another happened favorable to his plan, and he took passage from Boston, July 1, 1846. His third wife, whom as Mrs. Lydia Jackson of Boston he had married ten years before, accompanied him.

While abroad Dr. Beecher lectured and preached to vast audiences, principally upon temperance; and was very much taken up with conferences pertaining to the affairs and arrangements of the Alliance. Anti-slavery interests, too, came in for a share of his attention, he lecturing on the subject and conferring with friends in relation to the abolition cause in America. He found time to visit, amidst all these cares, the ordinary points of interest, not omitting at St. Paul's Cathedral a feat of daring which considerably astonished the guide. Not content with accompanying his party 260 feet into the tower, he persisted in mounting 404 feet to the top, and then crawling into the ball on the summit. His wife reported that after his

preaching in Crown Chapel, the pastor's brother remarked to her, "My dear madam, go home and take care of that blessed man, for his like is not to be found."

Passage home was taken on the 12th of August in the Great Western, which on the 19th encountered a storm lasting two days, which was so violent that hope of surviving it was generally abandoned. On Sunday noon there was a religious service held in the saloon, at which Dr. Beecher, recalling a similar scene in the life of the Apostle Paul, preached from the text, "I have seen Christ, and have the assurance that not one of us will be lost. Be of good cheer." The effect was magical for good, and although the gale continued to increase, there was no more talk of disaster.

In 1847, fifteen years after his coming to Lane Seminary, a suit-at-law was tried against Lyman Beecher in the Supreme Court of Ohio, in which he retained as his counsel S. P. Chase, H. Starr, and Charles L. Telford. It was the last of several efforts to eject him from his office as a heretic and intruder. The claim advanced was that he had come irregularly into his appointment, being disqualified to hold his professorship through loss of standing in the Presbyterian body. A good deal of money was spent, but as

in all Lyman Beecher's legal contentions, he was triumphant in the end.

It was in emergencies of this kind that the nature of the man came out clear and strong. In ordinary life his temperament furnished him with few of those prudential safeguards which smooth the pathways of mortals through the world; but when inevitable trial had come, he was all compact of courage and resource with which to meet it. This volatile, buoyant make-up was subject to cruel reactions, but it was behind all his achievement, and especially was a prime factor in making him the most effective preacher of his day, one at whose word, as a listener said, the face would burn and the heart beat. His friend Dr. Porter of Andover was right when he claimed that Beecher was not a metaphysician of the Edwards type, but a rhetorician and popular reasoner.

"Your forte," he wrote him, "is impression by vivid argumentation, and appeal from common sense and boundless stores of illustration."

Ever the humanness of the man was at war with his theology. Of evangelical temperament and training, he constantly grew more liberal in his views, until unconsciously he became one of the precursors of that modern orthodoxy which has so completely drifted away from Cal-

vinism. With all his doctrinal strenuousness, he could not swallow infant damnation, while even his teaching of total depravity did not escape frequent criticism and challenge. From the offensive, he was often called to the defensive in theological discussion, so that his public life seems to have been passed between two conflicting attacks.

It was the same also in the more private and personal life of the man. With the greatest solemnity in prayer and devout appeal, he united a joviality, an almost hilarious cheerfulness, which made him for old or young the best of companions. The deepest impression on the lives of his children was made by the daily prayers which seemed to touch the family communion with a sacred fire ; but they also remembered, and with an almost equal gratitude, that vivacity, that unaffected joyousness of disposition, which rendered their household intercourse a delight. His mind seemed to play with an imaginative fervor over the common things of life, while the originality of his insights and conceits made his conversation a constant surprise.

It has been said that his sayings were more often quoted in public and private speech than those of any American except Benjamin Frank-

lin. He had in large measure that power of creating an atmosphere and building up a personal tradition which belongs to men of the vital type. Among a crowd of men eminent in their profession, we are told that he loomed up with an instant and unquestioned superiority. When he mounted the platform, a waiting audience had a new sensation. Says a contemporary:

"There is a mystery and majesty about that plain, ruddy, nervous old man, which begets awe and reverence. Have we not all felt this in his best days, and had a shading of it on us even to the close of his life? We have felt that, like a great sea or a great mountain, Lyman Beecher had heights and depths of greatness which we had never exhausted. He was most ready and frank in communication, but the depth and force and fertility of the stream only led us to a higher estimate of the resources of the hidden, exhaustless fountain. I mean no disrespect to any body when I express the opinion that in massive talent Lyman Beecher stood among his brethren like Daniel Webster in the Senate—alone."

A born fighter, a cordial hater, Lyman Beecher lived in and enjoyed the polemics of his time, and in old age would have gladly gone back

and fought it all over again. He was like an old general who reluctantly lays down his sword and delights alone in the memory of his battles. And yet, in spite of his doctrinal zeal, his orthodoxy was never quite satisfactory, even to that school of Presbyterians who for the most part agreed with him; while those of extreme views were willing to pronounce him sound on original sin, but could not understand his toleration for those of his own sect who differed from him. But he would not denounce his friends, or hurl the ban of heretic against those who took another road to heaven. This was really the chief cause of his offending, and it cost him many an uncomfortable hour and not a little persecution. Within the recognized limits of his own denomination, whatever he might have been toward outside liberalism, Lyman Beecher showed a humane spirit and a resistance of sectarian pressure, "velvet in touch, Alpine in weight," which did great credit to his heart.

Jonathan Edwards bequeathed a troublesome legacy to his theological descendants, into which heritage no one entered more fatefully than Lyman Beecher. The two parts of his "Inquiry respecting the Freedom of the Will" were responsible for the widely different conclusions in

which the reader rested, according as he stopped with one or the other. Only the profoundest and most patient reasoners were able to see the two in harmony, and out of the rejection of abstract free agency of the one, and the Biblical appeal to moral obligation in the other, to construct a positive system of thought.

Lyman Beecher admired Edwards profoundly, but he paid the price of his loyalty in the confused thinking which the latter's philosophy entailed upon the Presbyterian Church. He and his son Charles were illustrations of the confusion, himself escaping with only outside opposition, but the latter for a time driven by the inexorable logic of the first part into the wastes of fatalism. The wanderer was finally brought back into the fold, but he reflected the prevailing disturbance of the religious mind; while the father went on his way rejoicing, without realizing how increasingly wide were his own divergences from the accepted standards of the past. His case was indeed like that of a trusted brother of his in the ministry, who thus addressed him in 1836:

"I early wrote out a course of theological lectures, hoping that they would stand by me from year to year; but I find on recurring to them that they do not *keep well*. They need

rewriting almost every year. If you can suggest a remedy for so great an evil, I should be much obliged."

As life went on with him, Lyman Beecher more and more reflected the sunnier influences of Christianity, and came to have a greater charity for those who disagreed with him in belief. Like all the rest of the thinking world, he had been caught up by the stream of a tendency, which, without knowing it, he had done his part toward creating. The time-spirit was upon him, and whether he willed it or not, his eyes had been touched to a new seeing, and his heart to a new feeling of truth. Above all, had the members of his own family, in the baptism of a vital and independent religious life which they had received from him, helped to carry him beyond the moorings of a fixed and traditional faith. The prayer of his life, the prayer also of that dying mother, who had looked forward to the future with such solicitude, had been answered, and all of his seven sons had become ministers, while the daughters were keen, intellectual women, deeply interested in religion and reforms. All of them, though evangelical in temper, were touched with the modern reactionary spirit, and thought and felt for themselves, mellowing the father's atmos-

phere, as they in turn came to exert the stronger influence.

It was a gracious sight to see how, as the years brought their changes, this strong, forceful man, who had been so long a leader of the people, came to look up to his children for light and guidance. As his own powers waned, he saw his sphere of influence constantly widening in them. They had reached out into fields of activity beyond his own, but they every one reflected his spirit and perpetuated his work. With marvelous rapidity the country had grown up around him. The primitive conditions amid which he started out on his career had passed away. City life had come, and created a vast cosmopolitan public, with new national issues to meet, and with tastes and interests in which it was difficult for him to share. But through his children he was carried into the very center of the modern ferment of ideas, and could feel that he was still a potent force for good. Henry Ward Beecher was preaching from Plymouth pulpit to a national congregation, and lecturing up and down the land, while the activity of his pen in book and periodical seemed well-nigh exhaustless. Harriet Beecher Stowe had already before his death carried her name into many languages with her *Uncle Tom's Cabin*;

while his daughter Catherine had made a place for herself in the world as an educator and writer for women. Edward, his second son, had begun his career as an author, with his much discussed *The Conflict of Ages*, to be followed by much other effective literary work. Charles was to follow in the same line; Thomas K. was to become a vigorous preacher and organizer in religious work; while Isabella was to become known in connection with the woman's suffrage movement and similar reforms.

But the beginnings of all these varied careers of usefulness had at first brought sadness in the home. The aging warrior, shorn of his strength as the children one by one departed looked about him and knew not how to reconcile himself to the quiet household. His last wife, Mrs. Jackson, brought with her a welcome addition in her two younger children, Joseph and Margaret, who henceforth became a part of the family life; but Dr. Beecher missed the bustle and the happy intercourse—one who knew him may surmise that he missed even the care—of those who had been so near to him in the past. It was, in part, to renew this intercourse and to insure its continuance, that a plan of circular correspondence was inaugurated. The father frequently complained to his now scat-

tered children that they did not write to him, or that their letters did not take him into their inner thoughts and feelings.¹ A large folio sheet, which was to act as a sort of peripatetic family confessional, was started at the eastern end of the line, each one as it went westward adding his or her contribution, until it returned to the point of setting out, and *vice versa*. In most cases the common address, Rev. Mr. Beecher, was all that was necessary; while the postmarks would run something like this: New Orleans, La.; Jacksonville, Ill., Walnut Hills, Ohio; Indianapolis, Ind.; Chilicothe, Ohio; Zanesville, Ohio; Batavia, N. Y.; Hartford, Conn. The following extract from one of these circular letters shows how the father sustained his part in the family correspondence.

"William, why do you not write to your father?

¹ "I am at length so entirely and distantly separated from my sons," he writes to his son George, "as I have never before been since the birth of my first-born, having always had one or more with me, and others so near as to secure frequent intercourse and aid in public action, but having now not one within two, four, and eight hundred miles. I am lonesome, and am stirred in spirit to bring my dear sons around me by correspondence, by which our sympathy and cooperation may be sustained, otherwise my quiver full of them may not avail me to speak with the enemy within the gate."

A novel way of accomplishing this end was accordingly devised.

Are you not my first-born son? Did I not carry you over bogs a-fishing, a-straddle of my neck, on my shoulders, and, besides clothing and feeding, whip you often to make a man of you as you are, and would not have been without? and have I not always loved you, and borne you on my heart, as the claims and trials of a first-born demand? Don't you remember studying theology with your father while sawing and splitting wood in that wood-house on Green Street, Boston, near by where you found your wife?

"Little do those know who have rented that tenement since how much orthodoxy was developed and embodied there; and now why should all this fruit of my labors be kept to yourself? Nothing would give me more pleasure, so long have your interests and mine been identified, than to hear often what and how you are, and how things go on all around you. Our prospects at the seminary are good. I am obliged to work too hard; still my health is good, and we shall certainly get along now, as I fully believe. Let me hear from you soon—a letter to me in particular, which shall soon be repaid in kind."

There is a very characteristic account of a grand family reunion which occurred during the

Lane Seminary days, and which is here given as it appeared in a daily newspaper. It is from the pen of George Hastings, a classmate of Henry Ward Beecher and his brother Charles while attending the school, and one who had come to be regarded as a member of the household.

"Long before Edward came out here, the doctor tried to have a family meeting, but did not succeed. The children were too scattered. Two were in Connecticut, some in Massachusetts, and one in Rhode Island. That, I believe, was five years ago. But—now just think of it!—there has been a family meeting in Ohio! When Edward returned, he brought on Mary from Hartford; William came down from Putnam, Ohio; George from Batavia, Ohio; Catherine and Harriet were here already; Henry and Charles at home too, besides Isabella, Thomas, and James. These eleven! The first time they ever all met together. Mary had never seen James, and she had seen Thomas but once.

"Such a time as they had! The old doctor was almost transported with joy. The affair had been under negotiation for some time. He returned from Dayton late one Saturday evening. The next morning they, for the first time, assembled in the parlor. There were more tears

than words. The doctor attempted to pray, but could scarcely speak. His full heart poured itself out in a flood of weeping. He could not go on. Edward continued, and each one, in his turn, uttered some sentences of thanksgiving. They then began at the head and related their fortunes. After special prayer, all joined hands, and sang Old Hundred in these words:

‘From all who dwell below the skies.’

Edward preached in his father’s pulpit in the morning, William in the afternoon, and George in the evening. The family occupied the three front pews on the broad aisle. Monday morning they assembled, and, after reading and prayers, in which all joined, they formed a circle. The doctor stood in the middle, and gave them a thrilling speech. He then went round and gave them each a kiss. They had a happy dinner.

“Presents flowed in from all quarters. During the afternoon the house was filled with company, each bringing an offering. When left alone at evening they had a general examination of all their characters. The shafts of wit flew amain, the doctor being struck in several places; he was, however, expert enough to hit most of them in turn. From the uproar of the general

battle, all must have been wounded. Tuesday morning saw them together again, drawn up in a straight line for the inspection of the king of happy men. After receiving particular instructions, they formed into a circle. The doctor made a long and affecting speech. He felt that he stood for the last time in the midst of all his children, and each word fell with the weight of a patriarch's. He embraced them once more in all the tenderness of his big heart. Each took of all a farewell kiss. With joined hands they joined in a hymn. A prayer was offered; and, finally, the parting blessing was spoken. Thus ended a meeting which can only be rivaled in that blessed home where the ransomed of the Lord, after weary pilgrimage, shall join in the praise of the Lamb. May they all be there!"

"Truly the crown of old men is their children."

CHAPTER VII

ANECDOTES AND SAYINGS

It remains only to relate a few of the characteristic anecdotes and sayings of Lyman Beecher, and to tell the story of his declining days, in order to complete this hasty record of his life. An entertaining volume might be made up on the Humor of the Clergy, and a large contribution exacted from the generation of ministers to which he in particular belonged. Sydney Smith, Father Taylor, Peter Cartwright, Lyman Beecher, what a fund of good sense lightened by good cheer would be taken from the world's stock of wisdom, if their words were no longer a part of literature! The last of these had many faithful witnesses, inheritors of his own wit, who delighted to preserve this more diverting side of his character from oblivion. Professor Stowe has left an account of some Boston experiences which help us to know and love the man. He says:

"The morning after his church on Hanover Street had been burned, and the firemen and the mob had been amusing themselves all night with their noisy jokes about 'Old Beecher' and his 'hell-fire,' several of us were assembled in Pierce's bookstore in rather a lugubrious state of mind. Presently the doctor, who had been to view the ruins, and saw his proud, substantial stone tower split from top to bottom with the intense heat, came skipping in as gay as a lark. 'Well,' said he, 'my jug's broke; just been to see it.' As there was no affectation in this—as it was all simple and hearty as the utterance of a schoolboy just let loose from the schoolroom, what could we do but join in the laugh and partake of the hopefulness? Those who are acquainted with the facts will remember that there were circumstances which made the conflagration rather mortifying, and the doctor's joke peculiarly appropriate.

"The same simplicity, buoyancy, and imperturbable good humor disarmed opposition when he came in personal contact with an opponent. An old wood-sawyer, whom we will call W——, a rough, strong, shrewd man, who belonged to a rival sect, was violently prejudiced against the doctor, especially on account of his total abstinence principles. He had never seen him, and

would not hear him preach. This man had a large lot of wood to saw opposite to the doctor's house.

"The doctor depended upon constant manual labor for keeping up his own health; and in Boston, where he could not enjoy the luxury of a garden to dig in, he was often puzzled to find means to keep himself in good working order. The consequence was that he sawed all the wood for his own large family, and, often finding that too little, would beg the privilege of sawing at the wood-pile of a neighbor. He was as fastidious in the care of his wood-saw as a musician in the care of his Cremona. In fact, there was an analogy between the two instruments. In moods of abstraction deeper than ordinary, it was sometimes doubtful which the doctor imagined himself to be doing—filing his saw or sawing his fiddle. That the old saw was musical under his hand, none could deny; and that he enjoyed its brilliant notes was clear from the manner in which he kept the instrument always at hand in his study, half concealed among results of councils, reviews, reports, and sermons, ready to be filed and set at any time while he pondered, or even while settling nice points of theology with his boys, or taking counsel with brother ministers.

"Looking out of his study window one day, when his own wood-pile was reduced to a discouraging state of order, every stick sawed and split, he saw with envy the pile of old W—— in the street. Forthwith he seized his saw, and soon the old sawyer of the street beheld a man, without cravat and in shirt sleeves, issuing from Dr. Beecher's house, who came briskly up and asked if he wanted a hand at his pile; and forthwith fell to work with a right good will, and soon proved to his brother sawyer that he was no mean hand at the craft. Nodding his head significantly at the opposite house, W—— said, 'You live there?'

"B. 'Yes.'

"W. 'Work for the old man?'

"B. 'Yes.'

"W. 'What sort of an old fellow is he?'

"B. 'Oh, pretty much like the rest of us. Good man enough to work for.'

"W. 'Tough old chap, ain't he?'

"B. 'Guess so, to them that try to *chaw him up*.'

"So the conversation went on, till the wood went so fast with the new-comer that W—— exclaimed,

"'First-rate saw that of yours!'

"This touched the doctor in a tender point.

He had set that saw as carefully as the articles of his creed; every tooth was critically adjusted, and so he gave a smile of triumph.

“‘I say,’ said W—— ‘where can I get a saw like that?’

“B. ‘I don’t know, unless you buy mine.’

“W. ‘Will you trade? What do you ask?’

“B. ‘I don’t know; I’ll think about it. Call at the house to-morrow and I’ll tell you.’

“The next day the old man knocked, and met the doctor at the door, fresh from the hands of his wife, with his coat brushed and cravat tied, going out to pastoral duty. W—— gave a start of surprise. ‘Oh,’ said the doctor, ‘you’re the man that wanted to buy my saw. Well, you shall have it for nothing; only let me have some of your wood to saw when you work on my street.’

“‘Be hanged,’ said old W——, when he used afterward to tell the story, ‘if I didn’t want to crawl into an auger-hole when I found it was old Beecher himself I had been talking with so crank the day before.’

“It scarcely need be said that from that time W—— was one of the doctor’s stoutest and most enthusiastic advocates; not a word would he hear said against him. He affirmed that ‘old Beecher is a right glorious old fellow, and the

only man in these parts that can saw wood faster than I can.'

"The doctor's unconscious, rustic simplicity led to many amusing scenes. I was walking one morning with the senior R. H. Dana in one of the narrow streets which lead to Quincy Market. We soon saw the doctor rushing up on the other side of the street with a bundle of what seemed to be oysters tied up in a silk handkerchief in one hand, and in the other a lobster, which he was holding by the back, with all the claws sprawling outward. Something had happened the night before which had pleased him very much, and, seeing us, he stopped and began to harangue us across the street with great animation, vehemently gesturing with his bundle of oysters and with his lobster alternately. Perceiving that he was becoming rather more conspicuous than was desirable (for there was soon a crowd in the street looking very much amused) he desisted and walked on. 'Well,' said Dana, with a laugh, 'I never before heard the doctor speak with such *éclat* (*a claw*).'"

"In 1846-7" writes Thomas K. Beecher, "father was sorely exercised by the severity of my work in Philadelphia. He feared a sudden breakdown. His urgency could not abide the slowness of the mail; he must save by telegraph

—I suspect his very first telegram. Aided by his daughter, he undertook his costly ten words to save a son thus: 'My very dear son,—I have worked more'—

"*Daughter.* 'Father, father, you can't write so much; don't say, My very dear son.'

" 'Dear Son,—Trust a father's experience, and let me tell you'—

"*Daughter.* 'No, no, father, skip all that. You can't make love by telegraph. Tom knows your love.'

"An hour was spent learning how to suppress his exuberant affection, until at last the message came into shape thus: '*Ease up. Rest—sleep—exercise. Cold water—rub. No tobacco.—Father.*' "

The same writer tells another incident illustrating the doctor's absence of self-calculation and perfect trustfulness. He says:

"One day in 1841 father rushed up-stairs in a great hurry, and said, 'Wife, give me five dollars' (one of the students was needing help).

" 'Why, husband,' was the reply, 'that is every cent we have!'

" 'I cannot help it,' said he; 'the Lord will provide;' and away he went with the five dollars. The next day, about the same hour, he came in, holding out a wedding fee of fifty dollars be-

fore mother's face, saying, 'Didn't I tell you the Lord would provide?' "

From the same source we have the following :

"But how unlike a student's his room always was, and what singular ways of studying! Do you remember the gun he used to keep loaded by the door ready for the pigeons that in those days (1833-5) came over by millions? Father would sit in his study chair deeply occupied, and set me by the cocked gun to watch for game. But he would hear the roar of wings as soon as I, and, with remarkable jumps for a divinity doctor, would get out the door, have his shot at the birds, and then go back to his pen. His spectacles used to delay him, and I well remember his delight with a new pair which he brought home, each glass composed of a plane half and a convex half. Looking through the convex lower section, he wrote metaphysics; through the upper he shot pigeons.

"Have you ever seen father when a fit of order and arrangement came over him? I remember five green boxes, say twenty inches square, in which the dear man again and again determined to put his disordered MSS., arranged and classified. 'There, Tom, keep my lectures all in this box, No. 1; put my revival sermons in this; and then—let's see,' and he would begin to look

over his piles, and to devise a third class. He would pile them up on the floor methodically. 'Now don't let anyone touch 'em, and to-morrow we'll finish up.' Alas! what with Trip, (the dog), and father himself, in a hurry to find some dimly-remembered fragment, the piles soon became remedilessly confused, then scattered, until a distant to-morrow came to re-begin and never finish the ordering of his MSS. At one of my last visits to him in Boston he fondly embraced me, saying, 'O Tom, I wish you could live with me and help me arrange my papers!'

The following takes us back to his East Hampton days. He was returning home on horseback one evening from Southampton, when he saw what he supposed to be a rabbit run across the path and then stop a little way off by the side of the road. It was moonlight, but he could not see very clearly, and his only weapon was a heavy folio which he had borrowed; nevertheless he said to himself, "I'll have a shot at you, anyhow." He accordingly drew nearer and, poising the ponderous folio, threw it with all his strength, to receive in return a discharge of an unexpected character, which necessitated the destruction of the book and all his belongings before he could again enter society. Years afterward when he was

suffering under the abuse of a certain individual and was urged to make reply in the papers, he said: "I threw a book at a skunk once and he had the best of it. I made up my mind never to try it again."

Dr. Allen, who was associated with him in his work, has told many sayings which show his sympathy with young men and his power of fixing truth in their memory by a graphic, pithy statement. "'You will have troubles, young gentlemen,' he would say, 'go where you will; but when they come, *don't dam them up, but let them go down stream*, and you will soon be rid of them.'

"'The soul in the body is inclosed "within mud walls," through the chinks of which the brilliant light of the soul shines.'"

Rev. Thomas Brainerd, D.D., of Philadelphia, among many striking reminiscences, tells of a remark which Dr. Beecher addressed to him when a brother was making a poor argument in Presbytery. "Brainerd," he said, "I had rather be before that gun than behind it." When Dr. Wilson wanted Dr. Beecher tried on common fame of heresy in the West, the latter replied that the common fame was made by Dr. Wilson himself. "One wolf," he said, "will howl on the mountains in so many tones you'd think there were a dozen."

Enough has been given to indicate one of the chief sources of his power. Lyman Beecher could be unaffectedly free and simple because he had no personal ambitions to consider, because humility and sympathy were the qualities by which he most cared to be known among men. That his life had play and sparkle did not argue that its sources were not deep beneath the soil. It was part of his working creed that wits were given for use and exercise, and that he had failed in duty who did not sharpen them. He made it a law in his family that there should be absolute freedom of give and take. With no self-consciousness, no fussiness of dignity, he stood on perfect equality with the youngest member here. No one was to keep back anything of point or repartee, the only condition being that it should be well *put*. If any of his children could get the better of him in a matter of fun or argument, he was held accountable alone for not seizing the opportunity with all his might. There were to be no favors asked by young or old.

By this means, as well as by the tenderer and more devout side of his character, he came nearer to his children than is often the case, even among those parents whose lives are not prevailingly serious and unusually burdened with care.

The great goodness of his heart was what subdued them to him, the vast wealth of his affections, and his natural and unstudied piety. The deepest impression which that wonderful family life left upon their hearts in after years was the memory of the father's prayers, especially in the hours when they came together for worship in the home. Great as was his sense of God in his moral government, and eager as he was at all times to realize some new light upon that plan of redemption by which the soul was to be reconciled to its Maker, his consciousness of God as a daily presence, partaking of the life experiences of his children, was even stronger still. The searching pathos of his outpourings at such times touched the deepest springs of emotion in the hearts of his hearers, and made real to them as nothing else had done the things of the Spirit. "That man had done a deal of magnetizing in his day," was the remark of a listener once, himself a man of eminent abilities. "But the *electrical* quality of his mind was not reserved for public display, while the inmates of his household knew only of its reactions. It was his children who most admired and revered him, and who had caught most of that spiritual fire which it seemed to be his mission to communicate."

CHAPTER VIII

LAST YEARS

On leaving Lane Seminary Dr. Beecher went to the home of his daughter Harriet in Brunswick, Maine. Professor Stowe had already found a new sphere of labor in the college there, and with them the doctor spent the summer preparing his writings for publication. He then took a house in Boston, whither his son Edward also had returned, after resigning the presidency of Illinois College, as pastor of Salem Church. John P. Jewett and Company had recently published *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and were soon to bring out *The Conflict of the Ages* for Edward, both books which were to have a wide circulation. Between the appearances of these two popular productions, three volumes of the father's works were issued, comprising his *Lectures on Political Atheism*, his *Sermons on Intemperance*, his *Occasional Sermons*, and his *Views in Theology*. Material for the Autobiog-

raphy also was being gathered at this time, which was to be put into shape later by the help of his children, especially by that of Mrs. Stowe, and which was to be incorporated into the two volumes entitled *Autobiography and Correspondence*, which was edited by his son Charles and published with illustrations in 1865. These volumes are a mine of interesting reminiscence and racy narration, and, but for too great prolixity, would be well worthy of republication. It is in part to call attention to this now well-nigh forgotten treasure that this brief record has been attempted. Every day we are drifting farther from the possibility of books like these, which charm us by their quaintness, their simplicity, and their fullness of life, but they ought not to be allowed to wholly disappear from notice.

There was a vast amount of unused material, papers and correspondence, which with the assistance of his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Louisa Dickenson, he brought together and arranged for publication, and which we can well believe is as full of human interest as reported. Lyman Beecher himself was so human that he touched nothing to which he did not impart something of this quality. He was so human, indeed, that he seemed, in spite of his dominant spirituality, to have woven himself into the familiar relations of

the world, and to have had more than usual difficulty at the last in extricating himself.

For a few years he was able to preach occasionally, and even to take part in revivals, where there were still fitful exhibitions of his old fire and effectiveness. But gradually he suffered more and more from loss of memory and inability to express his thoughts, until at last all public efforts were given up, and even the composition of the Autobiography, together with all his MSS., was committed to the care of his son. "As he handled these over for the last time," says the latter, "his heart was filled with regret. It was the warrior bidding farewell to trusty sword and spear. He gazed upon them with tears. 'Oh,' he exclaimed, 'if I might have but just ten years more, I could preach *so much* better!' but the necessity was inexorable; the sacrifice must be completed; and after all of reminiscence had been caught and preserved that could be, he went his way, sermonless and sorrowful."

There was still the Old South prayer-meeting, where he could find occasional expression; but, although his bodily powers remained intact, even this became increasingly difficult. Professor Stowe tells of meeting him at Andover on the day he was eighty-one, and of having him

as an attendant on his lecture at the Seminary there. Going on before, he presently saw the doctor skipping across lots until he came to a five-barred fence, when he put his hand on the top rail and cleared it at a bound, thus being the first to reach the lecture room. In 1850 a number of old Boston friends presented him with a life annuity of \$500, to which his children added a pledge of \$400 yearly. The trustees of Lane Seminary paid him \$3800 for arrears of salary, which in 1856 he used in part payment for a commodious house in Willow Street, Brooklyn, N. Y., near the spot where in 1802 he had stayed two nights with his Uncle Justin Foote. At that time there was no town there, only the house of his uncle; and he had sent home his horse by the stage-driver, and returned to East Hampton by a sloop. After a few months spent in the family of his son Henry Ward, he took up his residence here, becoming a regular attendant on the services of Plymouth Church, and living over his own labors in the even greater successes of his son.

It was hard for the veteran to be silent, and to the last he declared that he would gladly go back over the road he had come, troubled and thorny though it had been. Among his last sayings in the lecture-room of Plymouth Church

was one to this effect: "If God should tell me that I *might* choose," (and then hesitating, as if it might seem like unsubmitiveness to the divine will)—"that is, if God said that it was *his* will that I should choose whether to die and go to heaven, or to begin my life over again and work once more" (straightening himself up, and his eye kindling, with his finger lifted up), "*I would enlist again in a minute.*" When a well-meaning sister tried to console him in his decline by talking to him of the heavenly rest, he replied rather curtly, "Go there if you want to." In the decay of his powers, he kept some of the old fire, which flashed out now and then, while the sense of humor never deserted him. "Do you know," said Mrs. Stowe to him one day, as she stood over him brushing his long white hair, "that you are a very handsome old gentleman?" "Tell me something new," was the instant reply. Among his last words, as he shook off the oppression of approaching death, were, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown, which God, the righteous Judge, will give me in that day;" adding, "that is my testimony; write it down; that is my testimony." And when, later, after a vision which had lifted him into an exaltation greater than that of his

best days, his daughter asked him if he had had any fear, and if he had seen Jesus, he replied that "all was swallowed up in God himself." He died January 10, 1863, in his eighty-eighth year, and was buried from Plymouth Church, where a great throng came to do him honor. The discourse of Dr. Bacon on this occasion was a glowing tribute to his worth; but perhaps no memorial could speak more truly than these words of his son: "The thing of all others in him that affected me most was, not his intellect, or his imagination, or his glowing emotion, but the absoluteness and simplicity of his faith. The intensity and constancy of his faith made eternal things real to me, and impressed me from childhood with the visionary nature of worldly things, so that I never felt any desire to lay plans for this world."



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